A

SERMON

Preached at the

ASSISES

For the County of

SURREY,

Held in the

Burrough of *SOUTHWARK*,

March 23. 168$\frac{1}{2}$.

By RICHARD MEGGOTT D. D.
Dean of *Winchester*, and Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty.

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TO THE

RIGHT WORSHIPFUL

And My

Honoured Friend

PETER DANIEL, Esq;

High Sheriff of the County of

SURREY.

SIR,

IT was not in my Thoughts, that this Discourse should have gone farther than them for whom it was prepared; but since it was their desire as well as yours that it should I have submitted: Being preached at your Request, Decency requireth it should not come abroad but with your Name. Sir I have no reason to doubt, but that you are perswaded of what is here delivered of the Law of God;

and

and your Actings in this trying Time have ſhown, you have not ſo wild a Notion of Liberty, *as to truſt thoſe high Pretenders, who would be making way to it by overturning the* Laws of Men : *But there are too many who have weak and dangerous Conceptions of theſe things. To rectifie ſuch was the Deſign of this Sermon, wherein I have endeavored to repreſent* Chriſtianity, *as* Jotham *did the* Vine cheering God and Man, *directing and compleating our Behaviour for both Worlds. If any thing in it may prove uſeful, that they who outwardly profeſs the Faith, may ſincerely live according to the Rule of the Goſpel; I ſhall be glad, that by my Compliance in publiſhing it, I have ſhown my ſelf,*

SIR,

Your very Affectionate and

Humble Servant

R. Meggott.

JAMES 1. 25.

——The perfect Law of Liberty——

THE Solemn buſineſs of this time is the ſame with what we read of *Samuel's*, 1 *Sam.* 7. 16. where we find that he *went from year to year in Circuit to Bethel and Gilgal and Mizpeh, and judged Iſrael in all thoſe places.* This is a laudable imitation of that, and no contemptible priviledge it is for a People to have it ſo; to have Juſtice condeſcend to come to their Doors, and their Wrongs redreſſed, not only uprightly, but ſo conveniently.

And yet though this be ſo very well, every one muſt grant it were a great deal better there were no occaſion for it, that all men would be ſo honeſt and orderly

as to ſave the Magiſtrate ſuch labour. It is well there are Fetters and Gibbets for Robbers and Murtherers; but Oh how much better would it be, that ſuch would *labour with their hands the thing that is good, and do violence to no man!* It is well there are Priſons and Remedies for Cheats and ſuch as are unjuſt; but Oh how much better would it be that they would be *righteous in their dealings, and none go beyond or defraud his brother in any matter!* It is well that there are *Actions* and *Damages* for *Scandals* and *Defamations*; but Oh how much better would it be that *all bitterneſs, and clamour, and evil ſpeaking were put away from us*, and that there *were no backbiting*!

Fancifull and Eutopian as ſuch imaginations now look to them that know the World, ſo it would be in a *Chriſtian* Kingdom, were we *reall* in this Religion. All ſuch enormities this forbiddeth under ſeverer penalties than human Laws are capable of inflicting; for though every ſin againſt

againſt God is not an injury unto men, yet every injury unto men is a ſin againſt God.

And this is that my Diſcourſe at this time ſhall tend to; to evince, that the Goſpel is ſo far from diſpenſing with any of thoſe obligations the light of nature and reaſon lay on us, that it requireth them with more ſtrictneſs; it is a *Law*.

Not as Mens, in any thing deficient and incomplete, but wholly faultleſs; it is a *perfect* Law.

And that this may not ſeem inconſiſtent with the *Graciouſneſs* of the Diſpenſation, I ſhall ſhew you, that in all this, it is ſo far from being any real Incroachment upon our *Freedom*, that is that which beſt ſecureth it; it is a perfect Law of *Liberty*.

Theſe are the three particulars which the Text declareth of the Goſpel of Chriſt.

First, The *Nature* of it that it is a *Law.*

Secondly, The Exactneſs of it, that it is a *perfect* Law.

Laſtly, the Advantage of it, that it is a Law of *Liberty.*

Theſe conſidered, may tend ſomething to the clearing our Apprehenſions not only about the Authority, the Excellency and the End of this *Royal Law of Chriſt*; but alſo the Neceſſity, Quality, and Obligation of the ſundry *Laws of Men*; and in purſuance to that I ſhall ſpeak to each of of them.

The firſt thing we have here to take notice of, in this Deſcription of the Goſpel, is the *Nature* of it, that it is a *Law.* A *Law!* This ſoundeth a little unuſual, it it is commonly put in Oppoſition to it. The Evangeliſt telleth us, *The Law was given*

given by Moſes, it is Grace and Truth that came by Jeſus Chriſt. It is true, there is much difference between this *Law* and that of *Moſes*; but yet this is a *Law* too, as well as *that* was. A *Book of Statutes*, to explain and tell us what we ſhould do, and what we ſhould forbear; a *Rule of Life*, to inſtruct and ſhew us the good that we ſhould embrace, and the evil that we ſhould avoid: So it is called *the Law of Faith*, Rom. 3. 27. *The Law of the Spirit of Life*, Rom. 8. 2. *The Law which we are under to Chriſt*, 1 Cor. 9. 21. John 1. 17.

The Holy Jeſus, as he came into the World *revelare credenda*, to reveal ſaving Truths for our Inſtructions; *tollere peccata*, to make ſatisfactory Attonement for our Tranſgreſſions, *confirmare promiſſa*, to eſtabliſh pretious Promiſes for our Encouragement: ſo likewiſe *promulgare præcepta*, to publiſh ſtrict Rules for our Converſation.

The reſt of the Creatures are all eaſily ordered, the *Heavens and the Earth* hear God's Voice; the *Winds and the Seas* obey his Call; *Fire and Hail, Snow and Vapors* fulfill his Word; the *Turtle, and the Crane, and the Swallow* know all the times of their coming; but man, man, who in order to future Recompences is made a free Agent, abuſeth his Will moſt groſly, hath been a croſs and maſterleſs, a moroſe and diſobedient Creature from his very firſt Creation. *Line upon Line, Line upon Line, Precept upon Precept, Precept upon Precept*, hath been all too little to bind him. *Xenophon*, elegantly deſcribing him, obſerveth, Cattle will be kept within their Hedges, Horſes made tractable by their Riders, Wild Beaſts tamed by them that look to them, * πάσας τοινῦν τάυτας τὰς ἀγέλας, &c. All theſe (ſaith he) in time, are brought willingly to obey thoſe that look to them; but Men, head-ſtrong Men, ever ſet themſelves againſt thoſe that rule over them, and will not be kept in Compaſs.

* πάσας τοινῦν τάυτας τὰς ἀγέλας ἐδοκοῦμεν ὁρᾶν μᾶλλον ἐθελούσας πειθηνὰς τοῖς νομεῦσιν ἢ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τοῖς ἄρχουσι. Xenophon Cyropæd. *l.* 1.

This

This is so true, that God who knoweth us best, did never think fit to trust us in our own Hands; no, nor only in our Fellow Creatures neither; but himself hath given *Laws* to us, from the day that he first made us.

In the State of *Innocency*, there was a *Law* then. *Adam* had three Precepts given him in Paradise, to till the Ground, to cleave to his Wife, and not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge.

Noah, the Tradition is, had Seven. The Learned conclude the *Council* had an Eye to them in their Determination at *Hierusalem*, *Acts* 15. 20.

Abraham, it is said, had Ten, of which the great one was Circumcision.

Moses, if the *Jewish* Doctros have reckoned right, had Six hundred and thirteen Judicial, Ceremonial and Moral.

Yea,

Yea, the ſeemingly neglected *Heathen*, who had none *in Scriptis*, they had a *Law* too: the Apoſtle telleth us, *they ſhewed the work of a Law that was written in their hearts*, Rom. 2. 15.

And can any imagine that he, who was always from the beginning thus under Tutors and Governours, ſhould now under the beſt and pureſt diſpenſation be let looſe and unbridled? Where there is the ſame nature, can it be ſuppoſed there will not be the ſame need? *Do we make void the law through faith?* It is St. *Paul's* queſtion upon this occaſion: Some were ſcattering that looſe and peſtilent notion then, but he replyeth to it with all deteſtation, *God forbid!* *Yea*, ſaith he, *we eſtabliſh the Law.* So far was the Chriſtian faith from that, from *making of it void*, that it added new ſtrength to it.

Rom. 3. 31.

It is granted, our bleſſed Lord made an alteration in the *Law* at his coming, but it was

was only of what was *Ritual* and *Political*; that being *Topical*, and *Temporary* he thought fit to abrogate: but all that was *Natural* and *Moral* as *Oecumenical* and *Eternal*, he authoritatively vindicated and refined. In the first Sermon that he Preached, he instructed the World in this, informing them that *he came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it.* So that still we have a *Law* to walk by; and if it be asked what kind of Law it is, the *next particular* giveth account of it, where it is declared

A *perfect* Law. Laws will always be according to the persons that make them. *Tyrants* will make *cruel* Laws, *Rash* men will make *dangerous* Laws, *Good* men will make *equal* Laws, *Wise* men will make *necessary* Laws. Now this being the Law *of Christ*, the wisdom of the Father, in whom all *fulness dwelleth*, cannot but be *perfect* and lacking nothing; so it is an exact summary of virtue and duty, an adequate instrument to keep mankind within his proper limits.

That this may be the better evidenced (as the ſcantling of time will ſuffer) we will take a particular view of it and conſider it,

Firſt, *Intrinſically*, with reference to the matter that is contained in it.

Secondly, *Extenſively*, with reference to *Perſons* that are concerned in it.

Thirdly, *Comparatively*, with reference to any other Laws that may come in as Rivals in competition with it: and ſee whether upon every of theſe accounts it be not above all exception.

Firſt let us conſider it *Intrinſically*, with reference to the *matter* that is contained in it. Where is there a body of Laws beſides, that time and experience hath not found defects in? None of them but have their *caſus omiſſi*, and cunning men upon occaſion can be wicked and miſchie-

vous

vous in despight of them. The Golden heads of a Kingdom contrive them, and when they have done, sometimes the very Petty-toes find ways to elude them. The politick Sinner getteth priviledged places for his iniquity to lodg in, where none of these can reach him. But where can we fly from this Law's presence? Its going forth is from the Heavens, and its Circuit to the ends of the Earth, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. It needeth not the Pharisees ἀδιπρώσεις, nor the Romanists *Traditions*, nor the Euthusiasts new *Revelations*, to eeke it out: all that we owe either to God or man is sufficiently comprehended in it; nor can we turn either to the right hand or the left, but this layeth hold of us.

Human Laws can scarce make clean, as they should, the *outside of the Cup and the Platter*: Here are many dirty things the best of them make no provision for: But however this is all rhat they pretend to,

the *inward part may be full of raevning and wickedneſs* for all that they can do: though that be brimfull of deadly Poiſon, if it ſpill not in ſome overt acts, theſe can take no notice of it. But this taketh in the whole man, it *cleanſeth from all filthineſs both of fleſh and ſpirit*, and is a *diſcerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

To all which muſt be added, that every of the things ordained by it are to be accounted for in ſuch a manner, as no kind of artifices can avail the offender. No beſpattering the Evidence, for *our own Conſciences ſhall accuſe us.* No ſtifling of Proofs, for *there is nothing ſecret that ſhall not be made manifeſt.* No packing of Juries, for *the Saints ſhall Judge the World.* No Bills with *Ignoramus*, for *the Books ſhall be opened.* No favouring of Parties, for *every one ſhall receive according to what he hath done.* No miſrepreſenting the Tryals, *as it is written, that thou mighteſt be juſtified in thy ſayings, and clear when thou art Judged.* So *perfect*

is

is this *Law* consider'd *Intrinsically* with reference to the matter that is contained in it. Look upon it,

Secondly, *Extensively*, with reference to the *Persons* that are concerned in it; and you will find it *perfect* here too. The Net is suited to the waters it is cast into, and there is nothing can swim either by or through it. This Law speaketh the Psalmists Language, Psal. 49. 1, 2. *Hear this all ye people, give ear all ye inhabitants of the World, both low and high, rich and poor together.* Impartial as Death it self

—æquo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas
regúmq; turres----

It commandeth the Master as well as the Servant, and is not more favourable to a *Jezabel*, than to her Hand-maid. It chargeth the Magistrate as home as the Subject, and speaketh to the honourable as to the base; for there is no respect of Persons.

ſons. It doth not condemn intemperance in the Labourer, but allow it in the wealthier Landlord; forbid uncleanneſs in the Cottager, but connive at it in the Modiſh Courtier; threaten Atheiſtical profaneneſs in common People, but applaud it for Wit in men of Titles; puniſh ſpoiling of others in needy Subjects, but adjudge it conqueſt and glory in ambitious Princes. No, as there are none ſo mean as to be overlooked by it, ſo there are none ſo great as to be humoured by it. 'Tis a Law can give an anſwer to *Solomon's* Problem, it will *ſay even to the King what doſt thou?*

Yea, it not only reacheth to all *degrees* of men, but to all the *individuals* of every Nation, People, and Language under the Cope of Heaven: whereas all other Laws are confined to their particular Countries and Kingdoms, and have no place in others; this equally obligeth all, *Parthians and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Meſopotamia and Judæa,* &c. it extendeth

deth from Sea to Sea, and from the Rivers to the ends of the Earth. It is ſent into *all the World*, and to be *Preached to every Creature.* It is not Calculated for this or that Meridian, but our common needs and nature, and that is a ſecond *Perfection.*

Once more, Look upon this Law *Comparatively*, with reference to any other Laws that may be ſet up as Rivals in competition with it, and you will find that the faireſt pretenders that can be put in the Scales againſt it, muſt all have a *Tekel* written on them.

I will not (after but the little that hath been ſaid already) ſpend your time ſo needleſly as but to point at the many things wherein it excelleth the beſt and wiſeſt Laws of men,(there need no words to prove the Sun is brighter than a Candle;) it not only goeth beyond all theſe, but alſo that which God himſelf once made, that which he

he delivered to the World by the hand of his Servant *Moſes*. Even by that ſome *Statutes* were enjoyned, which in their own nature are expreſly pronounced by the Prophet, *Ezek.* 20. 25. *Not good:* others diſpenſed with for the hardneſs of their hearts, which in themſelves our Saviour telleth us, *Mat.* 19. 8. were not ſo juſtifiable.

When the World was in its Childhood, God thought it ſufficient that it ſhould *Speak as a Child*, that it ſhould *Underſtand as a Child*, that it ſhould *Think as a Child*, have but rude and imperfect notices of things: But in *fulneſs of time* then he inſtructed it higher, and taking it off from *Childiſh things*, trained it up in all that perfection of which it was capable.

It is but too notorious, that there are many things fathered upon this *Law*, weak and unmanly, wild and wicked in a high degree: there are few things ſo abſurd or ſhameful, that ſome wretches have not been

been wreſting Scripture for. *Barbarouſneſs and inhumanity* to all that are not of our our own way, this is juſtifyed for *pure Zeal*: *Diſpenſing with Oaths*, and *Depoſing of Kings* when they are not for our turn; this is maintained for *Church Authority*: *Perfidiouſneſs and breach of Faith* with thoſe we call Hereticks, this is vindicated for *Chriſtian prudence*: *diſturbing the World and taking up Arms upon pretence of Religion*, this is Preached up for *Goſpel Reformation*: *doing Evil*, and uſing indirect means, ſo it be for a *good end*, this is aſſerted for the Saints Priviledge: being *Buſie-bodies*, and *not abiding in thoſe callings wherein they are called of God*, this is pretended the *Motions of the Spirit*.

But why ſhould any ſuch miſ-ſhapen Brats be laid at its door? the Religion hath been often canvaſſed, and that narrowly, by ſuch as *Libanius*, *Porphyry*, *Lucian*, *Julian*, men that wanted neither Wit nor Malice; who would not have failed to

have charged ſuch things home upon it, had there been the leaſt ground for it. And yet not any of them, but how bold ſoever they made with the Speculative, as to the practical part of it, were forced to paſs the ſame Sentence in effect that *Pilate* did upon its Author, *we find no fault in it*; which cannot be ſaid of any other Laws that have been Publiſhed to the World, not the very exacteſt, and that is another thing that ſpeaketh its *perfection*.

Mathias a Michou, ſaith the reaſon why the *Tartars* received Mahometiſm and not Chriſtianity, was becauſe the *Saracens* perſwaded them that that Religion was the more pleaſing and indulgent. It may be the high perfection of its Laws may not only offend ſtrangers, but make even ſome that profeſs it ſtartled, and ask where then is the eaſineſs of Chriſts Yoke, if we are under ſuch a *Law* now? To remove therefore all prejudices that may arile in you from corrupt and idle Fancies upon that

Score,

Soore, paſs on to the laſt particular in its Character: and there you will find, that ſevere as it is, ſo far is it from really incroaching upon our *Liberty*, that it is that which beſt ſecureth it. This *perfect Law* it is

A *Law of Liberty*. *Liberty* is a Popular word, the very ſound of it we find is charming, and will work wonders. Make people but believe it is for *Liberty* in *Civil* affairs, and Incendiarys ſhall be magnified for deſerving Patriots. Do but pretend it is for *Liberty* in *Religious* matters, and Atheiſtical men ſhall be celebrated for true Proteſtants. Argue but for *Liberty* in *filthy* and *abominable* things, and ſuperficial youngeſters ſhall be admired for notable head-pieces.

But it looketh very ſtrange to find it coupled with *Law* here, they who can be brought to think they ſhall find it in the unlikelieſt places beſides, that can be named

to them, imagine it incredible that it ſhould dwell here. They may be perſwaded it is in *Vice*, in *Error*, in *Anarchy*; but that it ſhould be in *Law*, looketh meer contradiction to them. The *Law* that tyeth up, *Liberty* letteth looſe; the *Law* implyeth reſtraint, *Liberty* is to be without controll.

In this ſence indeed the little-thinking heap moſt commonly underſtand it: but we are generally guilty of wild *Miſnamers*, and do not call things by their proper names; if we did, we could never imagine theſe two inconſiſtent: So far it is from that, they cannot well be aſunder. For though it may be poſſible for *Law* to be where there is no *Liberty*: yet it is utterly impoſſible for *Liberty* to be where there is *no Law*. Then we ſhould be ſlaves to all other mens luſts as well as our own, and Beaſts would be leſs dreadful than our Neighbours.

Laws

Laws there must be to provide against this, and then they attain their true end, when they protect from all other evils, and are none themselves. Now of all the *Laws* the World was ever blessed with, none for that, like *Christianity*. It is such an institution as secureth us against all manner of mischiefs and inconveniences; not, as sometimes it is with mens, by methods almost as troublesome and vexatious, but such as are sweet, unexceptionable, and desireable.

That it may appear to be indeed what it is called, and that this taking title is not misapplyed to *it*, (not to mention such things as may not be so suitable to this occasion, though they are to the argument) I shall speak to some particulars wherein it deserveth this name, and shew,

1. That in the *Precepts* of it.

2. That in the *Mildness* of it,

3. That

3. That in the *effects* of it, it is a *Law* of *Liberty.*

1. A Law of *Liberty* it is in the *Precepts* of it, the things which it doth enjoyn. It is not a diſpenſation of carnal *beggarly Elements*, as St. *Paul*, a bundle of *cumberſom coſtly Ordinances*, as St. *Auguſtine*, calleth the Jewiſh Oeconomy, which this Law hath ſet us free from: No, *It hath ſeemed good to the Holy Ghoſt to lay upon us no greater Burthen than of neceſſary things.* The Way is pleaſant, the Yoke is eaſie, the Commandments are not grievous, like Feathers to the Wings of a Bird, not Loads, but Helps to Motion.

We picture Liberty in our Fancies, as *Tully* ſaith *Clodius* did in his Summer-houſe, not as a *Virgin*, but a *Strumpet*, proſtitute to all Extravagancies. Degrade themſelves into the manners of Beaſts, remove the Landmarks of the Law of Nature, do thoſe things, and glory in them, that a good natur'd

natur'd Heathen would be aſhamed and bluſh at; This the *Debochee* calleth the *Liberty of the Creature.* Be Sons of *Belial* to all Authority, deſpiſe Dominions, in ſpeaking evil of Dignities, change Times and Laws in Tumults. This the Seditious calleth the *Liberty of the Subject.* Sow Soul and State diſturbing Opinions, erect Publick Houſes, for ſeducing the unſtable, ſeparate from the National Church; but joyn in Communion with none at all: This the Schiſmatick calls *Liberty of Conſcience.* Amuſe the People with things out of their Sphere, Be-libel Superiors to the jealous Rabble, blow upon the Reputation of all that ſtand in the way of their Faction: This the Turbulent calleth *Liberty of the Preſs.*

Such *uſing of Liberty as an occaſion to the Fleſh,* it is confeſſed this Law doth not allow of; but how cauſelesly doth that Child complain of his Fathers Harſhneſs, who hath nothing elſe to ſay of him, but that

that he will not let him fly in his Face, or fall into the Fire, or beat his Brother? Abſtain but from theſe, from diſhonoring of God, from wronging our Neighbours, from ruining our ſelves; and there is nothing elſe we are debarred from.

The *Bedlam* hath as much reaſon to reſent his Keeper, as we the Severity of the Divine Commands. What do they require of us, but what is rational, decorous, and perfective of our Being? Nothing but what a wiſe ingenious Man in his deliberate Thoughts would choſe, if there were neither Heaven nor Hell. Our Chains are Bracelets, and our Fetters Ornaments, our Obligations Priviledges, and we free in the midſt of all theſe precepts, as the Head of a Prince within the Circle of his Crown.

Such a *Liberty* as the Spirits of juſt men made perfect have; ſuch a *Liberty as* the Angels before the Throne have, yea ſuch

a *Liberty* as the Eternal God himſelf hath (none of theſe have a Liberty to do evil) ſuch a Liberty is allowed us. That is one thing that ſpeaketh this Law a Law of *Liberty*, it is ſo in the precepts of it. Beſides this,

2. A *Law of Liberty* it is in the *mildneſs* of it. It is tender and very favourable even to them that offend and come ſhort of it. It is not like the Laws of *Draco* written in Letters of Blood but Gold. The *Law of the Goſpel* as it is a *Rule*, is (as hath been ſaid) ſtricter than the Law of *Moſes*, but then conſider it as it is a *Covenant*, and ſo it is not ſo ſtrict; for though the ἀκριβοδίκαιον be not performed, yet there is an ἐπιείκεια that ſhall be accepted. That which I may call the *Statute Law* of it, indeed is ſo pure that it caſteth us for every infirmity; but that there is a *Chancery* ſo kind, it will relieve us, if there be ſincerity.

If thou wilt be extream to mark what is done amiſs, O Lord, who may abide it? what would be the condition of the beſt of men, *if curſed were every one that continueth not in all things, that are written in the book of this Law to do them!* but it hath compaſſion on our frailties, and remembreth whereof we are made: and that ſo, as not only to make allowances for our weakneſs when we imperfectly keep it, but to accept of our repentance, when we have wilfully broke it.

And is this after the manner of men? do they provide ſuch Cities of refuge for their offenders to fly to? will a *nolle factum*, a moral revocation, be it never ſo hearty, ſerve the turn there? No though it may in ſome Caſes be favourably conſidered, as to the execution of the Sentence; it cannot in any be legally pleaded in arreſt of Judgment. But here it humbly may, inſomuch that when we are ſo qualified, the Apoſtle ſpeaking of it,

1 *John* 1. 9. doth not ſay God is *gracious and mercifull* (though that he is infinitely in it too) but he is *faithfull and juſt to forgive us our ſins, and to cleanſe us from all unrighteouſneſs.*

And is it poſſible for a Law to be more indulgent than this? Would you not bluſh to deſire more *Liberty* than ſo? He that delivered it hath procured by the price of his own Blood, that none but the obſtinate and impenitent ſhall ſuffer under it. Not only when we do well it rewardeth us, but even when we have done ill, *it ſpareth us as a father ſpareth his own ſon that ſerveth him.* That is another thing that ſpeaketh it a *Law of Liberty*, it is ſo in the Mildneſs of it. And

3. A *Law of Liberty* it is, in the *Effects* of it. I mean not now thoſe powerful effects, which by the operation of the ſpirit that goeth along with it, it hath within, upon the hearts of men; but thoſe happy

effects which by the wisdom of its injunctions, it hath without, upon the affairs of men. It procureth *Liberty* where it is obeyed, and all the World would be at ease and free were it but submitted to.

They that would insinuate as if Religion were nothing else but a device of Statesmen to keep the World in quiet, grant thus much however, in their base Suggestion, that it is excellently useful for such a purpose.

Every one must be convinced of this that but observeth how carefully it circulateth through the *Civil* body, as the blood doth through the *natural*, quickning every several member in its office: prescribing and establishing to Princes and their people, Judges and their Clients, Husbands and Wifes, Parents and their Children, Masters and their Servants, all of all degrees, that which is mutually best for all.

The

The Rules of it are so framed for general and publick good, that they who would be free from them themselves, think it necessary they should be observed by every body else: and were they conscientiously practised by all, there could be no complaining in our Streets.

The *Justice* and *Equity* which it doth require, would prevent all *Oppression*, *Robberys*, and safer *Consenage*. Its *Meekness* and forgiving of injuries restrain all *Cruelties*, *Duels*, and unnecessary *Law Suits*. Its *Truth* and *Sincerity* banish all *Lying*, *Falshood*, and Judicial *Perjuries*. Its *Self-denyal* and *Contentment* extirpate all *Covetousness*, *Pride*, and dangerous *Ambition*. Its *Charity* and *Unity* cure all *Sects*, *Animosities* and increasing *Divisions*. Its *Industry* and *diligence in our Callings* take away all *Idleness*, *Beggery* and Capricious *Prodigality*. Its *Sobriety and Chastity* hinder all *Adulterys*, *Bastardys*, and so fashionable *Fornication*. Its *Loyalty* and *Obedience to Superiors*, secure against

againſt all *Treaſons*, *Rebellion*, and moſt plauſible *Sedition*. In ſhort, all things that render men injurious or dangerous, burthenſome or offenſive to one another, it provideth againſt ſo effectually, that nothing could be wiſhed more, but the careful keeping of it to make all the Sons of *Adam* happy.

And it being ſuch a *Law*, as not only taketh care of the eternal happineſs of their Souls in the other World, but preſerveth ſo carefully, the Perſons, the Eſtates, the Credit, the Families of men, from all that ſhould prejudice them, even in this, none but muſt conclude it deſerveth the high Elogium here beſtowed upon it, and is indeed a *Perfect Law of Liberty*.

I ſhall therefore now conclude with this natural Inference from the whole, *That Religion is the ſtrongeſt and beſt ſupport of Civil Government*.

Where

Where is, where can there be, any juſt and wholſome Law of man, that is not at leaſt virtually comprehended in this perfect Law of God? The *Malmsbury* Philoſopher need not have been ſo fond of the Whimſie, as to have put it into more than one of his Writings, *That it is fit there ſhould be as many Statute Books Printed as Bibles*, and that they ſhould be read in the Churches, as *Moſes* was in the Synagogue every Sabbath day. The divine Statutes faithfully and ſolidly explained, will ſave the labour of ſo very unſeaſonable a Publication. For beſides a higher, they ſerve this purpoſe alſo; and in whatſoever tendeth to the peace and order, the preſervation and proſperity of human Society, ſpeak the ſame things with them. Not in particular, that is not to be expected. If every thing of that kind, among all Nations, ſhould be expreſly ſet down in holy Scripture (to uſe St. *Johns* Language) *I ſuppoſe that even the World it ſelf could not*

con-

tain the Books that ſhould be Written: but in the general they do; in joyning the Principles upon which they are founded, and for the ſeveral inſtances, remitting every one to the Laws of their own Country, commanding us to *be ſubject to every ordinance of man for the Lords ſake.*

So that if men were but *good Chriſtians*, they would be *good Subjects*, *good Officers*, *good Neighbours*, *good* in every ſtation that God ſhall place them in.

And when theſe are the benefits and happy fruits of it, let it not be thought affected or immodeſt, if here I break forth into the Pſalmiſts Apoſtrophe, *Be wiſe now therefore O ye Kings, be inſtructed ye Judges of the Earth.* And affirm it is not only the duty but even the intereſt of the higher powers to uphold and give it countenance. There is nothing ſo facilitateth the Magiſtrates Office, and prepareth the way for his Authority; this maketh men

to

to be a *Law to themſelves*, and obey humane ordinances, *not only for wrath, but alſo for Conſcience ſake.*

It cannot be denyed but that the pretences of this excellent Religion have wrought no ſmall confuſions on the Earth, but I hope the Religion it ſelf ſhall not be prejudiced becauſe of this, any more than you will ſuffer the lawfull Mony of *England* to be Cryed down or Clipped, becauſe there is ſome that is counterfeit. The Hypocritical pretences of it; are not more miſchievous to a State, but ſound and pure Religion is as beneficial.

And ſuch is that profeſſed in this *Eſtabliſhed Church* of ours. A *Church* that doth not ſlight Second Table Duties as *Legal Preaching*, or *Heatheniſh Morality*: but teacheth its members to *have always Conſciences void of offence as towards God, ſo towards men.* A Church that doth not place the *Spirit* of the *Goſpel* in *praying extempore* and

inveighing againſt ceremonies: but *in love, joy, peace, long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, goodneſs.* A Church that doth not flatter men as *Saints* and *godly* for *profeſſing themſelves of her way*: but teſtifyeth that the *Kingdom of God is not meat and drink but righteouſneſs.* A Church that doth not jugle in the *Doctrine of obedience to Magiſtrates, reſerving ſly diſtinctions* for *deſerting* or *reſiſting* them: but ſo Loyal, that upon that very ſcore (you know) it was once ruined, and is at this day maligned and heaved at, by as many as are given to change. And what can tend more to the quiet and welfare, the ſettlement and benefit of a People, than ſuch honeſt and ſober, pious and prudent principles?

Now when the Church is ſo aſſiſtant to the Tranquility of the State; for a recompence in the ſame, (I ſpeak as unto wiſe men) let the State be as aſſiſtant to the tranquility of the Church. When the Religion

gion is such a faithful support to the Civil Government, let the Civil Government be as faithful a support to the Religion.

So as God ordained of old, *The people shall be lead like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron*, and all of all conditions happy, in the *wholsome Laws of the land*, and *the perfect Law of Liberty*.

FINIS.